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County bus up for debate page 3 Dysart sidewalks page 12 Calendar Girls page 14

One step at a time for Head Lake foot bridge

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

To add to a very busy regular meeting of Dysart council last week, the hotly-debated topic of the Head Lake Pedestrian Bridge came to the table. Rob Camelon, the director of public works for the municipality, was tasked with assessing a variety of bridges that could be available for the downtown site.

While different styles have been discussed in past meetings, Camelon noted that engineers have once again made the suggestion of implementing a bridge with an arch above the water to accommodate headspace underneath, with a pile foundation on either side; which was the original recommendation made

see HEAD LAKE page 12

Hop to it
Spring is in the air with the RE/MAX Professional North Spring Hop in Head Lake Park this past weekend, with face painting, crafts, and event a visit from the Easter Bunny. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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AIR MILES

Amalgamation, compensation, and conflict

Behind the scenes with local councillors

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

With the interest and success of the past three presentations by the Haliburton Highlands Healthy Democracy Project (HHHDP), it's shaping up to be an exciting election season.

On March 25, HHHDP hosted their third Voices and Votes speaker series, featuring four representatives of municipal councils to discuss the behind the scenes details of local government.

Sitting on the panel were Carol Moffatt, Andrea Roberts, Pat Kennedy, and Dane Neilsen. While many would recognize the first three names as local representatives, Nielsen was brought in as a current council member of Grey Highlands.

The topics of the conversation circulated around reasons for wanting to get involved, compensation, commitment to the role, and conflict resolution. Heather Reid, the moderator of the evening, asked a series of set questions, before spending the second half of the event opening the floor to questions from the audience.

The intent of the evening was to provide a first-hand approach to the experience around local government, and paint a picture of the expectations and lifestyle for someone in that role.

"It's not a thankless job," said Andrea Roberts, the former mayor of Dysart et al, who spent 16 years in the council chambers. "It's a very rewarding job … I grew as a person. I became stronger and more confident, and there's satisfaction in even the mundane things."

The presenters were asked about conflict resolution in council, to which Carol Moffatt, the former mayor of Algonquin Highlands and County Warden, noted that conflict shouldn't be happening at all. "There shouldn't be conflict at a council table," she said. "You're supposed to disagree, it's consensus building, it's negotiation, and you should disagree until you agree … there's no place for conflict."

Nielsen agreed with Moffatt's sentiments. "Adults are allowed to disagree," he said, noting that often, constituents will also find fault in council actions. "And that's okay, we're allowed to disagree. You have to remember that they're not mad at you as a person, they're mad at the situation."

The buzzy topic of council compensation was raised, with Pat Kennedy, former deputy mayor of Dysart, noting that the pay grade is far from desirable. "I think the compensation levels are way too low," he said. "And you have to have a lenient employer. It's those daytime committee meetings are what's preventing new blood from coming in."

Roberts agreed, but offered a rebuttal, noting that if you are entering local government for the pay, you shouldn't be entering at all. She listed a number of volunteer organizations that commit to bettering the community with no financial expectations, and council can be compared to that form of giving back.

Dane Nielsen, Andrea Roberts, Pat Kennedy, Carol Moffatt, and Heather Reid discussed the 'behind the scenes' world of municipal politics last Wednesday at the Minden Community Centre. The presentation was the third instalment of the Voices and Votes speaker series. /EMILY STONEHOUSE staff

The hotly discussed "A-Word" (in this case referring to amalgamation) was brought to the table. Haliburton County is a multi-tiered system, with four lower tiers of municipal government, and one County Council comprised of mayors and deputy mayors from each tier. Taxes and responsibilities are spread between the tiers, and over the years, many conversations have circulated around the efficiencies (or inefficiencies) of multiple levels of government in a rural community.

Through an ongoing service delivery review, the County of Haliburton is currently assessing the gaps and overlaps apparent through the multi-tiered system; a project that is ongoing.

"It's time," said Moffatt, confidently. "Prior to Covid, I was not a fan of amalgamation, but following Covid, all the reasons to stay multi-tier went away … you have to be willing to embrace something different, something new. It's better to embrace it and design it yourself than to find out you've become a part of Muskoka."

While Nielsen saw Moffatt's reasoning, he presented the point that the lower tiers each capture a different group of people, and he worried those people may not be represented accordingly if amalgamation were to take place. With Grey County comprised of nine lower tier municipalities, "I see conflict," he said, if amalgamation were to take place.

Throughout the evening of conversation, the passion was palpable amongst the representatives. "I absolutely love this job," said Nielsen. "This job has the ability to understand the community better than any other resident … and if my kids need to leave Grey Highlands because there are no opportunities, then I've failed at my job. Do it for the next generation in your community."

"You need to be a good person who cares about the community," said Moffatt. "Don't be afraid to run and lose … don't lose sight of why you ran, and don't be the reason you ran in the first place."

The final Voices and Votes speaker series is set for April 21 at the Stanhope Firefighters Community Hall. The presenting speaker will be Lauren Hunter, a seasoned campaigner, speaking to grasping campaign success. This session will be just prior to the official nomination period for interested council candidates.

The HHHDP is a non-partisan organization under the umbrella of the Haliburton County Co-operative, which aims to educate and inform residents about the upcoming municipal election.

> *"You need to be a good person who cares about the community ...*
>
> *Don't be afraid to run and lose.*
>
> — Carol Moffatt, former Mayor of Algonquin Highlands

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Sleeping on a good cause

Places for People held their annual Sleeping in Cars event this past weekend in Head Lake Park, to raise money and awareness for housing insecurity. Many camped out in their vehicles in the park overnight and enjoyed music by Gord Kidd and Jodi Timgren, with pizza provided by 241 Pizza and breakfast from the Kozy Korner after a cold night. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Wheels on the bus not stopping in county anytime soon

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Members of County Council once again tossed around the idea of community transit options during their most recent meeting on March 24.

Held in the Dysart council chambers while the county meeting location is under renovation, director of economic development and tourism, Scott Ovell, provided council with an update around the project.

In 2024, county staff issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a set transit service that would operate between the Township of Minden Hills and the Village of Haliburton. The RFP received one qualified response, but due to the cost of the response, it was recommended by staff that the county not enter into an agreement with the provider; a recommendation approved by the sitting council.

In the late spring of 2025, staff presented a follow up report to council, outlining recent examples of transit services operating in rural Ontario. It was recommended the scope of work of the previous transit RFP be modified to include an on demand/hybrid option for respondents, with the goal of identifying a transit solution that was more cost effective. This was encouraged by council last year.

The county currently has $182,601.52 in a transit reserve to support the implementation of a transit service in the County of Haliburton, but if one thing has been made clear by the unsuccessful proposals, it's that the amount seems far too low.

Staff received four qualified responses to the most recently revised RFP, and at the most recent council meeting, Ovell made the recommendation to not proceed with any. While Ovell did not share the dollar amounts proposed in the RFPs, he confirmed they were "in excess of double what was in the transit reserve."

"Transportation is something that's coming up more and more," said Councillor Bob Carter, the mayor of Minden Hills. "It's certainly not going to go away, particularly as our population grows, and it grows farther away from settled areas."

While Carter noted that he agrees with turning down the qualified RFPs due to the price points, he suggested directing staff to put together what it would cost to have transportation. "In other words, what would the subsidy need to be," he said.

"I can't see anything moving in 2026," said Councillor Cec Ryall, the deputy mayor for Highlands East. "It just doesn't work." Ryall suggested a reserve fund set aside for the coming years with a primary focus on transportation.

Councillor Jennifer Dailloux, the deputy mayor for Algonquin Highlands, noted that the single fixed route system between two main points in the community may never become a reality based on price points. "I don't think the economy scale could ever, ever support transportation for the entire county," she said. "And I just wonder, now that we are getting globally so much better at the private systems that can benefit from support from townships et cetera, it's so much more flexible and organic and dynamic pricing, and I just wonder if we could put the whole fixed route system to bed now."

"We don't have large industry here," said Councillor Murray Fearrey, mayor of Dysart et al. "We don't have someone to sponsor this. We aren't so lucky … it's all on the property tax, I'm sorry, it's going to be very hard to do."

CAO Gary Dyke noted that he would like to keep the fixed rate on the table, in case any sort of funding opportunities arise. "I wouldn't want to lose the premise," he said. "The ultimate goal is a more advanced transit system, so it's always there for fiscal planning going forward, but the reality of how we get started and how we get something in place."

Councillor Walt McKechnie, deputy mayor for Dysart, questioned who would be using the transit system, and noted that the local population is not comparable to a larger city centre. "The demand to see something isn't going to go away," said Ovell, "whether that's from the vulnerable sector or from our employers, it is something, probably in the top two or three things I hear about on a regular basis from our business stakeholders."

The staff report submitted to decline the proposals received was approved based on budgetary restrictions. It was recommended that considerations for the program be put in place for the 2027 budget deliberations.

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A close-up of a local deer. Photo by Tammy Nash

New doctor calls Haliburton home

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Another new physician will be joining the roster in the Haliburton Highlands. Starting May 1, 2026, Dr. Jeet George will be starting a full-time practice in the area, with three days per week with the Highlands Family Health Organization, and one day per week in the Emergency Department at Haliburton Highlands Health Services.

Wendy Welch, the physician recruitment coordinator for the County of Haliburton, brought the good news to the council table, during the March 25 meeting. Welch shared that Dr. George holds a medical degree from the University of Kerala, India and advanced international qualifications, including MRCGP (UK), MRCP Part 2 (UK), FRACGP (Australia), and JCCA/DRGA in Anaesthesia, reflecting broad expertise in general practice, emergency medicine, and procedural anaesthesia.

He practiced medicine in the United Kingdom for eight years before relocating to Australia. He has been practicing a combination of family, emergency and GP anesthesia in Australia for the past 17 years, and has received his license to practice medicine in Ontario. Dr. George has committed to the next six years in Haliburton County.

With over 8,000 residents without a family doctor, and a waitlist of over 1,000, Dr. George will be taking on 700 new patients. Welch shared that there are ten family physicians currently practicing primary care in the clinic with Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team. Welch noted that there is a need for two additional family physicians to bring their staffing level to a full complement.

"These numbers don't take into consideration the situation in Kinmount," noted Welch, "where 300 Haliburton County residents will be de-rostered in May as a result of Dr. Van Der Leden's exit. So, you can see this waitlist number is very fluid."

Councillor Bob Carter, the mayor of Minden Hills, was supportive of the recruitment, but rang the bell of concern over the payment. "We as a county are getting 75 per cent of him," he said, noting his proposed four day work week split between emergency services and the Family Health Organization. "As I've said before, a couple of times, HHHS should be contributing to this. They should be, in this case, paying one quarter of these costs, and it shouldn't be just on the county, because we are subsidizing them in doing that."

"Getting 75 per cent of the doctor is better than what we have," said County CAO Gary Dyke, while he noted that the recruitment program is far from perfect as a provincially legislated initiative. "Hopefully with the new leadership at HHHS, we can get together and work on an equitable form going forward."

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Algonquin Highlands heads to phase two of budget talks

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

Algonquin Highlands has continued to make progress with their 2026 budget.

After much deliberation, council approached a special council meeting on Tuesday, March 24 with an increase of nine per cent, representing an additional $470,908 to the municipal levy. After county and education tax rates, the increase of the total tax rate would be 5.57 per cent, or just shy of $50 pinched from residents' pockets for every $100,000 in assessment.

During this special council meeting, the subjects were divided into five topics including public works, airport, planning, Parks, Recreation, and Trails (PRT) and General Government.

Public Works

Big Hawk Lake Road

The main topic regarding public works was the widening of Big Hawk Lake Road. The widening project is estimated to cost $1.5 million. The potential loan would have an interest rate of four per cent and a 10, 15, or 20 year loan timeline.

Councillor Julia Shortreed said that she would prefer the Big Hawk Lake project affect the levy, as the project clearly benefits taxpayers.

"I don't agree with widening the road at all on Big Hawk Lake Road," said Councillor Sabrina Richards. "It is better for the need of the area and better for our tax dollars to look at (an) alternative proposal of enlarging the log chute parking lot and secondary parking lot. I think it is far too expensive and doesn't give enough impact to the community to widen the road."

Mayor Liz Danielsen said that she agreed with Richards. Without finalizing their parking discussions, she says that she has heard too many people say that widening the road would bring no benefit to them.

Councillor Lisa Barry said that timed parking for trailers may be a solution to alleviate parking issues.

Dailloux noted that if the local ward councillors near Big Hawk Lake Road feel that, she is happy to support them.

Stanhope Municipal Airport

Councillor Barry expressed concern with the longevity of the proposed roof repairs at the airport. Currently, two methods of roof repair have been discussed, including a total replacement, or to build a roof above the current roof structure.

"Right now we are still waiting to hear back on the second option for the roof replacement," said Adam Thorn, public works manager.

"Do we have an understanding of the rate of return for the airport hangars," asked Barry. "What time of a return have we got from the money we have invested and the money we are proposing to continue to invest in."

CAO Angie Bird said that the construction of the hangar was paid for through a grant.

"There is no option to not repair it," said Thorn. "You have to replace the roof or we have to put a new roof on top of it, whatever works out the best that is most efficient and less invasive to our tenants."

Mayor Danielsen offered an analysis in the future to determine if increased lease rates would be a good idea.

"If there is no return on the investment, then I think we need to have a bigger discussion," said Barry.

Councillor Richards requested the specific revenue that could be generated from Hangar D.

CAO Angie Bird estimates that the hangar would generate over $10,000 per year.

"Are we talking $20,000 or are we talking $50,000," asked Richards.

"We budgeted $147,000 for the current revenue from the airport leases," clarified Clerk Dawn Newhook.

"We don't want, in my opinion, only to recover what it's going to cost in a loan for them. We need to have other funds because there will be other repairs beyond the roofs," said Richards. "I think we need to be at least revenue neutral to make them worth having."

Deputy Mayor Dailloux urged council to consider the airport as a whole, rather than individual components earning enough money.

Thorn confirmed that he will be bringing the firm that the municipality has been talking with to discuss the airport development plan on April 16.

"The benefit of the hangars is not to our tax payers, it is to those who use them," said Richards.

Councillor Barry expressed frustration with the county not providing money towards the airport, relying on the municipality to pay for upkeep.

While there was some displeasure with the bill for repairs, council was told that the repairs are unnegotiable.

After extensive discussion, council agreed that paying using funds from reserves would be the better option in footing the bill for the roof repair.

Planning

CAO Angie Bird confirmed that Habitat for Humanity are not interested in the property at Maple Lake estates. Another parcel of land was discussed, but planner Sean O'Callaghan said that the seven acres was misidentified, and is a part of a former landfill site.

The draft budget included $35,000 for forecasted planning costs.

PRT Master Plan

Richards, Barry, and Danielsen said that they would like to defer continuing with talks regarding the Parks, Recreation, and Trails (PRT) master plan. For now, the Municipal Accommodation Tax will remain the same.

"For me it sits in that little trinity of the parking master plan, the airport master plan, and the PRT master plan where we can actually start to strategize return on investment for certain things," said Dailloux. "How can we continue to provide excellent services but think more strategically about how those revenues come back towards us. It is an investment in an investment."

Shortreed said that she would prefer to postpone due to the current economy and council's progress towards their goals before the imminent election.

Council agreed to defer the discussion of the PRT master plan.

Parking

"We didn't come away with a philosophy in which to apply all of our decisions henceforth," said Dailloux.

Council was unanimous in that they will not proceed with a second phase of consultancy for parking.

"I don't think they gave us best practices, they just gave us current practices," said Dailloux. "It is hard to take from that what a really stellar strategy would be for us."

Council was in agreement that they can progress with working on parking issues further using in-house staff.

CAO Bird confirmed that they are capable of continuing the progress of parking.

Christmas lighting

Chris Park, PRT Manager defended his proposal of a commercial lighting system for the tree lighting events at Dorset, Stanhope, and Oxtongue Lake. The total cost for the lighting was estimated to be $4,000.

Council was initially hesitant of the idea. However, Card explained that over the past three years, the municipality has spent around $2,300 on Christmas lights.

"My hope and intention is that a commercial lighting system would mean we are not spending $1,000 a year," said Card. "If we maintain them properly and take them down and store them indoors each year. They are commercial grade and they should last many years. We'd be saving money in the four to five years mark."

Council was receptive of the proposed tree lighting system, approving it for their budget.

Dorset Rec Centre

Blinds were the hot topic regarding the Dorset Recreation Centre.

Shortreed said that the blinds are needed.

With many community groups and renters wanting to show videos and use a projector, there is greater potential for renting out the space the more versatile it is.

The blind system would cost $5,100.

"I support the idea in principle but that is a lot of money," said Barry.

Dailloux said that the investment likely would improve programming, and that would have a positive return of investment.

Richards noted that they have contributed improvements to the Dorset Recreation Centre already this year, such as new sport netting. She said that the council should be cognizant about how much attention one space gets.

Council decided to put the $5,000 back into reserves, putting the blind system discussion on hold.

In addition to blinds, council discussed funds going towards an ad campaign. Card said that there is a continuous growth in members at the centre; around 50 per cent each month. He implied that an ad campaign may not be necessary, and will work with Chad Ingram, communications manager, to identify how they can strengthen their services.

Desks

Council decided not to pursue new desks for the council chamber.

After much discussion, AH council finalized a budget with an increase at 5.535 per cent. The second draft of the budget will be presented in April.

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Power to the people

IT'S ALWAYS interesting when you become the subject of a small town rumour.

I've found myself in this position a few times this past week. I'll use this column to quell any further chatterings around the topic, and confirm that I am not running for council in any capacity with the upcoming municipal election.

While I am flattered that there are apparently some out there who think I have what it takes to sit at that table, for this stage of my life, I prefer to stay on the sidelines, and use the pen as my sword.

With that in mind, it's important to remember that while only a select few may throw their hat in the rings for council competitions, we all play a role in the election results.

Editorial

Emily Stonehouse

Last week, I attended the Healthy Democracy Project's presentation featuring both former and current members of council. While putting a handful of politicians on a stage does have the potential to often go sideways, in this particular context, the entirety of the evening was positive.

There was a palpable passion to the crew; an energy that flowed through them that's hard to put to words. It's care and compassion in real-time; a vibrancy only seen through the glow of people who put others above themselves.

And the room at the Minden Community Centre was packed. Some were there to learn more about running, while others were simply curious about the behind-the-scenes world of municipal politicians.

So what are the next steps? There's a hope that some will throw their names in the ring; ready to duke it out for the role.

But that certainly isn't for everyone. Challenging expectations, learning curves, and something far from a livable wage will prevent many from getting involved.

But there are other options.

Because as the people of this community, we have power.

When the topic of increasing the wages for council members came up during the evening presentation, it became apparent that councillors tend to shy away from the conversation. In that role, it's inevitable that your every move is surveyed through a magnifying glass for public consumption.

And that's exactly the way it should be.

But if you want new people to join the table, you need to be able to pay them a wage that reflects their efforts, their time, their commitment to the cause.

Otherwise, we are cutting out an entire demographic of individuals who would fall through the financial cracks.

So when council makes a proposal to increase those wages, it's not to put more money in their pockets: it's to ensure the next round of dedicated folks are compensated accordingly, opening up the catchment curve to include all brackets of economic prosperity.

And as the people, we have to push for that. We have that power to bring the topic to the table, to open up the lines of communication, and to float the issues that are near and dear to our hearts up to the surface of conversations.

Because we may not all have a seat at the table, but we're all deserving of a decent meal.

Aiding and abetting

THE THIRD Healthy Democracy event drew a good crowd in Minden last week, including a good scatter of the non-grey-haired demography. They heard a panel of retired municipal leaders, two mayors and a dep mayor, and a younger, from away, current counsellor, talk about the benefits and challenges of public service at the municipal level.

My primary take-away from that is that being a municipal politician is a big job for crap pay, but worth it – if you afford it. Those not financially self-sufficient need not apply – unless you have an employer prepared to subsidize you.

I was discouraged to hear an ex-mayor say that 'doing it for the money' was not appropriate motivation. She touted the moral satisfaction of full-time volunteering that so many of us enjoy. (Note: mayors and dep mayors make a reasonable income, all streams combined.)

But the underlying concern, I thought, was about the nature of leadership. Strong mayor power was the acknowledged boogie-man. I don't recall it being mentioned that that could be solved by reducing every township table to five, which would also allow the counsellor salary line to be shared among fewer people which might address in some way the crap pay problem.

Poke, Peel Pair, Ponder

Fay Martin

The current sharing of power among a flotilla of elected leaders (I count 32 political positions serving a population of 23,000) managing a morass of inter-related workers now serves as our security blanket. The self-evident fiscal inefficiency of such an arrangement chews some holes in that blankie. We (should) worry that if we don't solve that problem, it will be solved for us. That municipalities are legally the dependent children of the province does not let us sleep soundly, even if Premier Ford was jolly when he visited us in our time of need, a year ago.

So leadership: what we've got ain't good, but what do we want?

There was agreement in the Minden room that elected leaders need to hear from their constituents and act accordingly for the general good. But 'hearing from' is not the same as 'hearing'.

Hearing is not the same as doing, sometimes for good reason, sometimes not. We heard about the advantages and aggravation of mandated protocols. Even in our personal lives, it's hard to distinguish between further consideration and procrastination.

It's hard to distinguish 'special interest groups' from 'engaged citizens' at duelling range. You can't please all the people - never mind 'all the time', try 'ever' (I learned that when I was president of the Students' Union Ways and Means Committee in Grade 8!)

The solution lies in recognizing the connectedness, whether we like it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, between the elected and the electors. The worm in the bud of democracy is that we get the government we deserve.

So: if you don't vote, you lose your right to comment.

If there's nobody you consider worthy of leadership on the ballot, you haven't done your work as a citizen. (That is the raison d'être of the Healthy Democracy project.)

If your preferred candidate didn't win, either you didn't do your work or you're not in tune with the majority. Your work, in this case, might be to raise the decibels of the call for a more nuanced way of expressing preference, say by using a ranked ballot. I reaffirm my support for the logic of campaigning with and for the people you think would make a functional team around the council table. Rather than the winner-take-all duel mentality that FPTP requires.

I often look to Indigenous wisdom about the nature of governance and leadership. They managed this land for a very long time, and while we don't know a lot about how they managed that responsibility, the evidence is they left it in pretty good shape for us to 'acquire'. So they knew something we don't. Or act like we don't.

An article by Darryl Isbister, University of Saskatchewan, shared that in the context of reconciliation, he suggests replacing the word and concept of 'ally' with 'accomplice'. An ally stands on the sidelines and cheers for those who are fighting the good fight. An accomplice enters the fray, not as an equal but as someone who shares in the outcome. An equal-but-different partner. Isbister says accomplices 'accept the risk that … leaders assume'. Their 'support is true and absent of performance. They will focus their efforts on the tangible actions that affect change.'

I thought that idea was very adaptable to the concerns expressed in the Minden room last week. If citizens became accomplices in the business of managing municipal responsibilities to optimize general well-being, we would be a team, not warring factions. We would work together to use all types of resources with utmost respect and effect. We would collectively celebrate our accomplishments (my road doesn't have any potholes this spring!) and learn from our mistakes (County Rd 121 does has car-eating potholes– on the CKL side).

Let's hear it for aiding and abetting. Let's practice being accomplices.

points of view

Ode to the plunger

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

I THINK WE can all agree that nobody is ever happy to see the lowly plunger – until of course you need one. Then, for a brief moment, your plunger may not be the hero you want, but it is certainly the hero you need.

I won't get into unnecessary detail, but suffice it to say, if we had medals for plungers, mine would have been awarded the plunger equivalent of the Victoria Cross this morning. Perhaps with Oak Leaf Clusters.

Thankfully, there are no such medals. Because, if there were, my plunger probably would have been invited to the White House where Trump would have pressured it into handing that medal over.

I know. Right now, you are probably saying, "Can you please stop writing about such a disgusting, repulsive tool?"

Sure, let's get back to the plunger.

I think we can all agree that the plunger is perhaps the most underappreciated tool we all own – also the bravest.

Yet – and you may find this surprising – there is no National Plunger Appreciation Day, even though there isn't a person I know who does not owe their plunger a huge debt of gratitude that they can never fully repay.

In fact, the closest we get to celebrating the important work our plungers do is on December 18th, which is, as we all know, International Wear a Plunger On Your Head Day.

I'm ashamed to say, despite what I do for a living, this is not something I normally celebrate. I have a hard enough time being taken seriously. But after this morning's heroics … well, let me just say, there will be a small gathering at my house.

Or at least I say that now.

The truth is our plunger has already been disinfected and placed back to its designated corner where it will wait stoically, until called upon to serve a grateful household again.

When you think about it, the plunger is basically the special forces in the army of the tools we own. It goes underwater past dangerous obstacles towards the objective, performs a surgical strike, applies maximum pressure, and then leaves until needed again.

It works in the shadows and goes on highly classified missions. It has seen things.

It's basically Unseal Team Six.

Is this gross? Clearly.

Is this a strong indication that I do not have a good column idea for this week? Absolutely.

When writing a column like this, as I have two to three times a week for the last 27 years, you always sit down and ask yourself what should you write about today? You then go through your mental Rolo-Dex and review all the things you have penned columns about. Then try to pick a subject you have not yet touched upon, and also wonder why you have a mental Rolo-Dex instead of an app on your phone?

No matter. The hope is to find something original, creative – basically, a topic that resonates with your readers.

Instead, you reach deep into the musty pockets of your brain, where you hold your best ideas, and you come out with a handful of lint and "Ode to the Plunger". And since you've already written about a handful of lint three times…

Look, I think we all knew it would one day come to this.

The good news is next week will be different. I got a new nose-hair plucker. And it has settings …

pic *of the* past

This week's Pic of the Past was brought into our office last week by Sheila Curry Popple. The image captures a moment from the 1961 Haliburton Rotary Trip to a convention in Japan. From left to right: Anna Jones, Maxine Curry, Ruth Good, Dr. Harry Good, Harold Herlihey, Bea Herlihey, and Ron Curry. /submitted

Calendar Girls

Tales from the great Green meadow

Lynda Shadbolt

THERE IS something so beautiful about a community gathering in a small theatre - people settling into their seats, exchanging smiles with familiar faces, and preparing to share a story together. When the lights dim and a play like *Calendar Girls* unfolds, what emerges is more than entertainment. It becomes a shared experience of laughter, grief, resilience, and connection.

I had the pleasure of attending this production this past week at Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion, and what stayed with me most was not only the story itself, but the incredible group of actors who brought it to life with such warmth, humour, and heart.

Because in a community like ours, we know these actors. They are our neighbours, our friends, the people we chat with in passing. The people we ski and sing with. And that makes the experience all the more special. From the moment the play began, their connection to one another was unmistakable. There was an ease, a natural rhythm between them that can't be manufactured. It comes from real relationships, from shared laughter offstage as much as on. That connection was a gift - to them, and to all of us watching. And truly, they made us laugh - really laugh. The kind of laughter that bubbles up unexpectedly and spreads across the room. The kind that has you glancing at the person beside you, both of you caught in the same moment of joy.

Each actor brought such personality and comedic timing to their role, leaning into the humour with confidence and playfulness. The now-famous calendar scenes, which could easily feel awkward, were handled with such joy and delight that they were some of the most hilarious and memorable moments of the evening. What made it even more delightful was how much fun they were clearly having. You could see it in the quick exchanges, the shared glances, the subtle ways they supported each other through every scene.

Their enjoyment was infectious. It reminded us that theatre, especially in a small town, is as much about the joy of creating together as it is about the final performance. *Calendar Girls* is a story about friendship and loss. Based on a true event from 1999, it follows a group of women who come together after the death of a beloved husband. In the face of grief, they choose action - creating a calendar to raise money in his memory. What unfolds is both deeply touching and absolutely hilarious. And it is in that balance that the actors truly shone. They moved seamlessly between comedy and tenderness, holding space for both laughter and quiet emotion. That balance felt especially meaningful because it mirrored something true about our own lives. We laugh together, even in hard times. We show up for one another. And just like the women in the play, we find strength in community.

Experiencing this through our local theatre made it all the more powerful. Productions like this are built on passion, generosity, and connection. They remind us how lucky we are to live in a place where people come together to create something so joyful and meaningful. I left the theatre feeling grateful - not only for a well-written, well-directed, and beautifully acted performance - but for the people who made it so special. Their laughter, their courage, and their connection lit up the stage and filled the theatre. What a gift to our community - and how much fun it must have been for them to share it with us.

letters to the editor

Another big tent, really?

To the Editor,

So does the National N.D.P. really aspire to be a big tent party like the other two? Is that the best way forward, living in a flimsy cloth structure in a ravine under a bridge with other benighted people. Sure it's marginally possible in summer but not in winter or other difficult weather events.

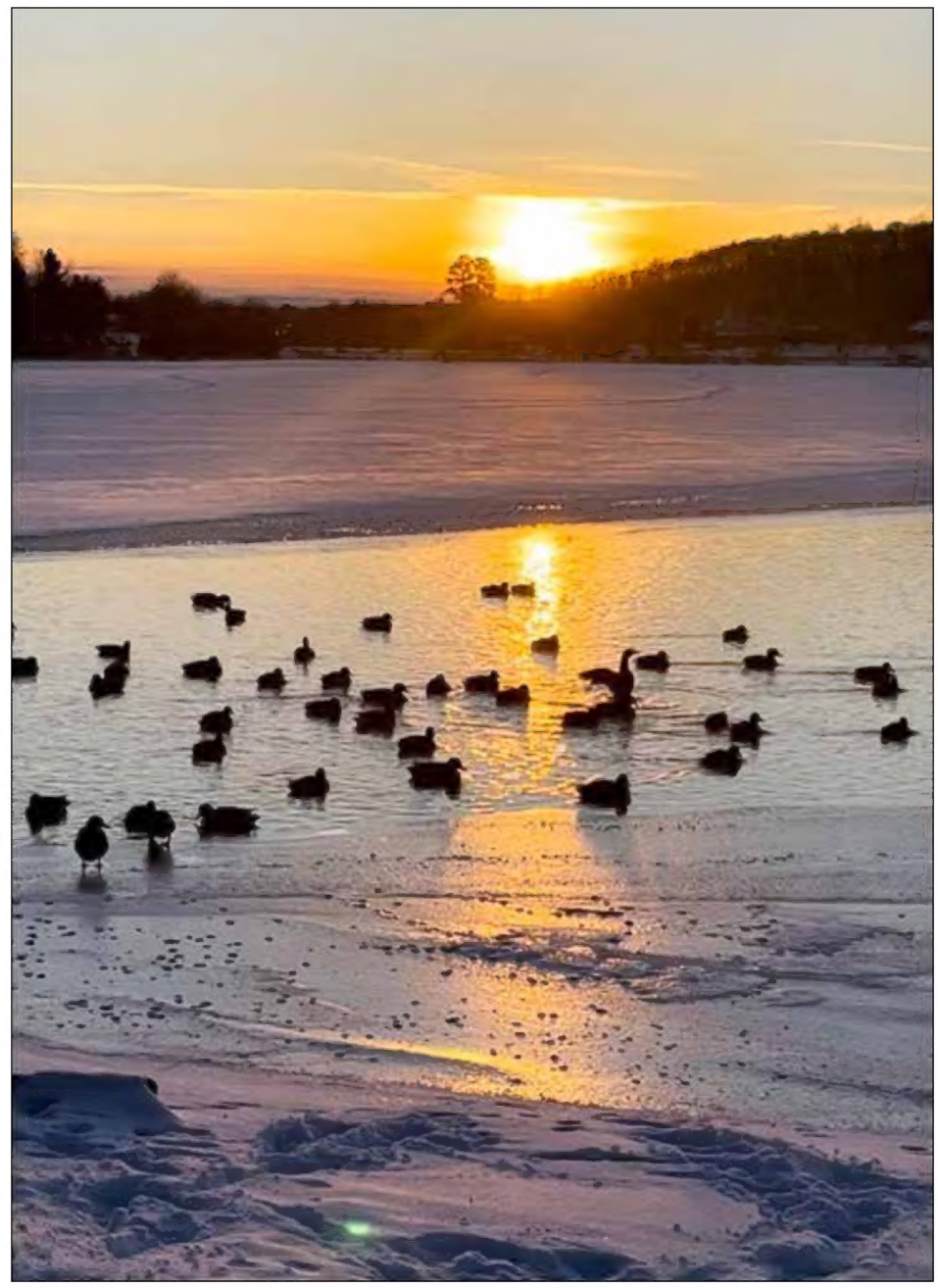
Have I belaboured this metaphor beyond understanding? I just want to say that until we create a modern electoral system that produces fair representation of all significant points of view in the nation, province or municipality, we will run the risk of poor governance like in our southern neighbour and too many other places around the world.

Jim Milne,
Dysart et al

Letters to the Editor note: Submissions are subject to editing for newspaper style and punctuation.

Caring for the community

100 Women Who Care Haliburton County showed their support to the HHHS Foundation by contributing to the purchase of a new CADD Pump for palliative care. The HHHS team will be working quickly to purchase the new equipment as soon as possible. Pictured, from left to right, HHHSF Board Chair David Blodgett, Valerie Jarvis, Pat Bradley, Interim President and CEO of HHHS Jennifer Burns West, Leslie Banner, Melanie Fockler, Margaret Cox, nterim Clinical Manager Acute and Emergency for HHHS Karla Gottschalk, Interim Chief Nurse Executive Tori Miscio, HHHSF Executive Director Melanie Klodt Wong, Judy Thayer, and Palliative Care Patient Navigator Beth Archibald. /submitted



Ice Out returns

It's that time of year again!

For decades now, our newspaper has hosted their annual Ice Out contest, where we ask the community to guess the official date that all ice will be melted from Head Lake. The winner of the contest will receive one full year subscription to the *Haliburton Echo* or the *Minden Times*.

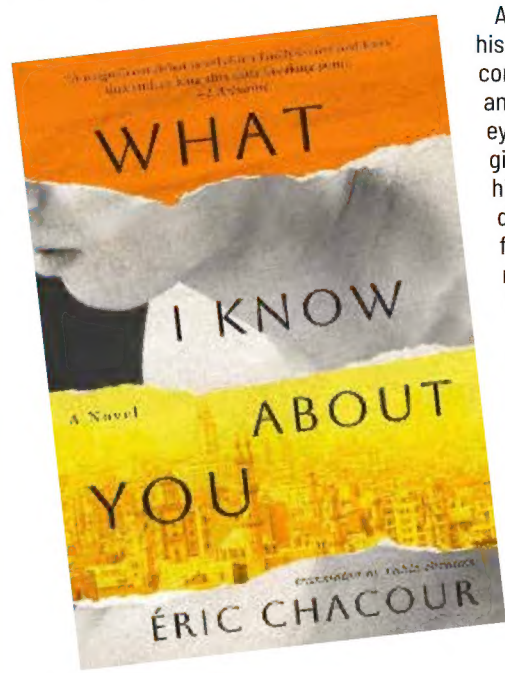
Send your best guesses to emily@haliburtonpress.com for a chance to win. Good luck!

Minden Memories

This turn-of-the-century photo shows Jack Train posing on his "velocipede" along Kinmount's Main Street; Of the buildings pictured, only the former structure across the bridge still stands today. It is now known as Kinmount House. /Photo courtesy of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre

HALIBURTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Book of the Week



As a boy in 1960s Cairo, Tarek believes his life is already mapped out: he'll become a doctor like his father, marry, and have children. Under the watchful eyes of his mother and sister, he begins down that path - until Ali enters his life and turns everything upside down. The two men, from very different worlds, embark on a forbidden relationship that threatens to tear Tarek's family apart.

Years later, living a solitary life in Montreal, Tarek finds someone is writing about him - and to him - reconstructing a past he'd rather forget. But who is telling his story, and will he uncover the truth in time?

What I Know About You by Éric Chacour is available to borrow from the Haliburton County Public Library. Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

Spring has sprung

The RE/MAX teams from Haliburton and Minden brought some Easter fun to Head Lake Park this past weekend, with games, an Easter egg hunt, and lots of laughs. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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Snowflake Meadows seeks support for kennel

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

Animals provide unconditional love to those that choose to bring them into our homes. Sure, we provide them with a warm place to live, but there is no better feeling that having your pet choose you.

For Kristyn Begbie, she is pursuing her childhood dream of caring for animals that love her unconditionally.

Founded in 2018, Snowflake Meadows has grown amidst increasing demand. Waking up at 5 a.m. every day and going to bed at 11 p.m., Begbie realized that she needed help with an overwhelming number of surrenders, rescues, and dogs that need fostering.

Now, she has four core volunteers that she relies on, including Shanna Dryburgh who vets potential adoptees. She is in charge of conducting interviews and ensuring that their personalities and lives will blend well with an animal in their lives. She also contacts a vet reference to ensure that the animal will have veterinary care in the future.

Brenda Larson is currently in charge of their foster program connection with potential fosters, checking in on their progress, and keeping up with vet appointments.

Cathy Chumbley has graciously donated her time to Snowflake Meadows to take care of their accounting needs and monitor their expenses.

And Peggy Miller assists Begbie on Snowflake Meadows property, visiting three times per week to help the operation run smoothly.

"They volunteer their blood, sweat, and tears," said Begbie. "It has allowed our rescue to rescue more."

Snowflake Meadows is currently raising funds to build a kennel space on their rescue's property. With over 50 dogs at their max capacity, the demand for the rescue is quickly exceeding their capacity. Through fundraising efforts, direct e-transfers, and community support, they hope to meet their goal this year. /THOMAS SMITH staff

The founder says that Snowflake Meadows has rescued "a little bit of everything" including a tortoise, fish, parrots, birds, chickens, horses, sheep, goats, and even a peacock.

Last November, Mortimer, the eight year old Sulcatta tortoise captured the hearts of many through Snowflake Meadow's social media.

At 42 pounds, the desert dwelling tortoise outgrew his original owner's capacity. Destined to grow to a whopping 200 pounds, Mortimer now causes mischief at the rescue located on Ritchie Falls Road.

With his own space to roam upstairs, the Snowflake Meadows team is currently retrofitting an ice hut into a year-round home for the tortoise, including his own pasture to roam outside in warmer weather.

A lover of pumpkin, squash, and lettuce, Begbie says that she is currently trying to figure out a tortoise diaper to make his roaming a little bit tidier.

Fans of Mortimer can expect him to make an appearance on June 6 at Snowflake Meadows' Magical Festival Fundraiser.

With the dogs that are rescued through Snowflake Meadows, around $5,000 per month is spent on veterinary care in the form of vaccines and parasite prevention. For each dog that needs a spay or neuter, the procedure costs upwards of $3,000.

Luckily, their dog food is supported through the Kibble Project. Begbie estimates that the rescue spends $110 on dog food for 60 days of feed.

All of the money that Snowflake Meadows receives is through donation drives, community support, and the nail trims and microchipping events that Begbie offers. The fees from every adoption go towards covering a portion of the costs of care, feeding, and support. Begbie says that some people choose to donate to the animal rescue through their estate in honour of their past loved animals. This is an incredible honour for their team, and is always both moving and emotional for them knowing that they thought of the care of animals in their own honour.

Living in Haliburton County is already expensive to afford. With caring for an animal, housing, grocery prices, and unstable housing are all some factors that make caring for a dog difficult for some.

"Dogs need somewhere to go when there is nowhere else," said Begbie.

Begbie is striving to break the belief that if you cannot afford care for your dog, you should just let them loose into the wild. Snowflake Meadows is willing to work with owners to support them in getting the care the animal needs, providing temporary shelter in an emergency, and letting pets continue to live with the owners they love.

During moments of peaks, Begbie says that she had 54 dogs at one time on her property. While she has a barn and her own home with young children, Begbie is currently raising funds for a new kennel building. The kennel will provide 10 kennel spaces for dogs to quarantine. In this space, Begbie and volunteers will care for the dogs and observe their temperament before introducing them to both dogs and people.

Two of the rooms in the kennel will be bigger with the intention for them to be used as sound-proof birthing areas.

Snowflake Meadows is setting their sights on raising $17,500 to cover the costs of the build.

Begbie wishes that there were more people around the world that share her drive to rescue animals. Even in a low population region like Haliburton, she has a huge demand for rescuing animals.

You can directly support the animal rescue by e-transfer at snowflakemeadows@gmail.com. Currently, they have a Guess the Mutt contest, with a $10 donation you can visit their social media page to guess the breed of Nala. Half of the proceeds will go to the grand winner and half will go to the rescue. They will also accept gift cards to any of the local pet stores and Minden Mercantile to help keep up with repairs.

"I have always wanted to rescue animals since I was two years old," said Begbie. "This is a lifelong dream for me. Knowing that I am a dog's second chance makes me feel like a good human being."

Mortimer, the Sulcata tortois, is one of the newest members of the Snowflake Meadows family. Sometimes he needs a helping hand... /submitted

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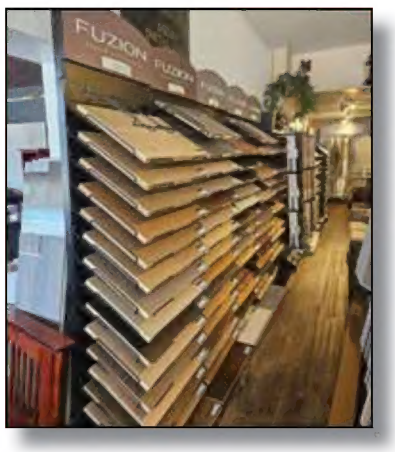

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Fleming Job Fair; connecting the dots

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

The hall at the Haliburton Legion was abuzz during the annual Fleming Job Fair this past Tuesday, March 24. With job seekers and employers filling the room, the possibilities were endless for career opportunities in the Haliburton Highlands.

RPM Marinas had set up a booth right inside the entryway to the event, and shared that this was their first year participating. "We've got a lot of positions to fill," said operations manager Dominique Glembus, "and I think we will find some from this."

Glembus noted that the organization is hiring for mechanics, drivers, cleaners, and front desk staff at the marina. "Staffing is difficult," she said, "especially for some of these seasonal jobs, it's difficult to hold onto qualified trades people."

Trades were just one of the industries present at the event, which planned two pop-ups, one in Haliburton on March 24, and one set for Minden on April 8. Other industries present included culinary, community service, fire, and outdoor education, to name a few. This is the first year the job fair is being split into two events, to help eliminate any transportation issues for attendees.

Fleming CREW Employment Centre, a community resource for employers and workers, plays an integral role for job seekers. "We support our Fleming Crew clients with access to transportation, which helps our job seekers find a job in the area," said Sandra Scott, manager of Employment Ontario programs through Fleming College. "We also work on retention, resume writing, and even first day of work clothing. We can help with all of that, completely free." Fleming CREW clients must meet certain criteria for funding.

According to the recently released Local Labour Market Planning Report, presented by the Workforce Development Board (WDB), key positions that have been difficult to fill in the region include skilled trades, health care occupations, middle management positions, and entry-level positions.

The team at Fleming Crew pause for a picture during the Job Fair held last week at the Haliburton Legion. Another session will be hosted in Minden on April 8. The organization aims to pair up suitable employees and employers in the area. /EMILY STONEHOUSE staff

It was also noted that retention and turnover have remained key concerns in the local workforce, with 26 per cent of hiring businesses needing to post positions more than once due quick turnover. "Competing with companies offering higher wages has been a particular challenge for employers, as has retaining staff in smaller communities," reads the report. "To address retention issues, employers have introduced incentives such as increased wages and vacation time, signing bonuses and benefits, enhanced onboarding practices, professional development opportunities, and flexible work options."

Spencer Devolin was one local who worked in the trades before starting his own business, Devolin Professional Painting. Last year, he hired his team from the attendees at the Fleming Job Fair. With a stack full of resumes dropped off, Devolin was confident that he would continue to build his team from the event. "It's busy," he said, "and maybe it's not for everyone, but we like to have fun, and it's great for that seasonal option."

Scott shared that offering these types of events – with seasonal and full-time jobs available – offers a variety of options for anyone interested in tapping into the professional market locally. "We try to offer a wraparound approach," she said. "The philosophy is playing in the sandbox with everyone, which benefits everyone in the community."

The next Fleming Job Fair is set for April 8 at the Minden Community Centre from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information on the career services available to both employers and individuals looking for work, visit www.flemingcrew.ca.

Town Halls planned for Lakelands Public Health; seeking community input

Lakelands Public Health is inviting residents across the region to share their ideas, concerns, and priorities for the future of community health as Lakelands Public Health launches a series of Community Town Halls.

The sessions are designed to create an open forum where community members can discuss the health issues that matter most to them and help inform future public health priorities.

"Public health affects nearly every aspect of our daily lives," said Dr. Thomas Piggott, Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer with Lakelands Public Health. "We want to hear directly from residents about what challenges they're seeing in their communities and what supports would make the biggest difference."

Each Community Town Hall will include a brief overview of Lakelands Public Health services, followed by interactive discussions with staff and opportunities for participants to provide feedback. Attendees will also be invited to complete a short survey to further share their perspectives and contribute ideas about how to strengthen local health programs and services. Input gathered during the town halls will help guide planning and future initiatives.

The sessions are open to residents, community organizations, healthcare providers, and anyone interested in improving health and wellbeing in the community.

"These conversations are an important part of ensuring public health services reflect the evolving needs of the people we serve," Dr. Piggott. "Community voices are essential in shaping what comes next as we build Lakelands Public Health for generations to come."

The Haliburton County session is scheduled for Tuesday, April 14 at 4 p.m. at the Minden Community Centre.

Submitted

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A new look for Highland Street

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Rob Camelon, the director of public works for the Municipality of Dysart, brought what he referred to as "another bit of good news" to the council meeting last Tuesday, in regards to the results from the Highland Street Public Realm Improvements Request for Tender (RFT) put out through the township.

The project is set to kick off this summer with the replacement of the sidewalks along Highland Street, to which Camelon received three bids. The lowest bidder was instantly rejected due to not executing the bid bond, so with accordance with the procurement bylaw, were excluded from further considerations.

The other two submissions, Four Brothers Construction and Total Site Services, came in at a total cost of $914,625 and $1,138,502.57, respectively.

Total Site Services is owned by Councillor Pat Casey, who removed himself from the room during the discussion, and declared pecuniary interest at the start of the meeting.

With the Woodville-based Four Brothers coming in at eight per cent below the original construction estimate, Camelon made the recommendation to proceed with the organization.

"It would be nice if it could have been done local, but it's $250,000," said Dysart Mayor Murray Fearrey. It was noted that the company does own property in the region, making them local taxpayers.

Gymnastics fee split in half by local council

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

A past agenda item was brought back to the table at the March 24 Dysart Council regular meeting of council, with Kathy Judson, the owner of the not-for-profit Haliburton Gymnastics group, seeking relief from the fees associated with building and planning applications.

Jeff Iles, the director of planning and land information, noted that there were two levels of fees required for a new development: external and internal.

While council directed staff to look into details around the site's septic system during the last meeting, it was confirmed that Judson intends to use the existing system on-site, and will build the plan accordingly with that in mind. The system in place will permit a maximum of 35 people as the capacity.

"I'd like to see some sort of grace on what they're asking for here," said Councillor Pat Casey, in regards to the original ask of waiving the $8,000 in fees around the building permit, as well as any additional fees that may arise. "Let's get them started. I think it's a great thing for the community," Casey added.

While the fees are split up, Judson sought relief from $1,500 for the zoning by-law amendment application fee, $1,250 application fee to amend a site plan agreement, $250 septic review application fee, and a $5,000 deposit for potential legal and engineering fees. It was noted that the site plan agreement would warrant a change due to the site's official change of use.

"That's the basis for it," said Iles, "I think it would be in our best interest, just due to the use of the building, given that there's going to be classes and kids onsite." He noted that the property is located "just" within 500 metres of the municipal waste site on Industrial Park Road, so a site change of use would protect everyone should potential water contamination arise. "We may want to protect ourselves long-term," he said.

While Mayor Fearrey noted that the external fees are managed, the internal fees continue to come in at a total of $6,250, including a zoning application fee of $1,500, an amendment to the site plan agreement, which would be $500, a septic review fee at $250, and the building permit fee, which is 75 cents per square foot, totalling $3,950 for the space.

"I don't know if we can tinker with the building fees," said Fearrey, "but the rest of them we can certainly do ... I think that's quite a precedent to set."

Councillor Casey suggested a 50 per cent discount to the price.

Council supported recommendation to waive half the fees, totalling $3,125, which was approved.

Head Lake bridge project may become 'remove only', says staff

from page 1

for the project.

Camelon also noted that the materials used for the existing highway bridges have ceased operations in Canada in light of the ongoing tariffs dispute with the United States. "I'm not sure what this kind of vacuum we have now in the steel industry in Canada is going to do for any tendering moving forward," he said. "We may want to go to tender and the price may come back just ridiculous and we can't afford it."

"Then what do we do?" countered Mayor Fearrey. "If the bridge isn't safe, you can't just leave it there."

"Then I would say that the project becomes a remove only," said Camelon, "and you're without a bridge in the park."

"I struggle with a cost of a half a million dollars to replace what we have," said Councillor Pat Casey. "I do believe there's other solutions yet that lay ahead that might be possible on that note."

This topic has been circulated around council meetings since March, 2024, when the firm DM Wills was retained for a feasibility study. In October of 2024, council approved the replacement of the footbridge in 2025 to be funded by reserves in the absence of grants.

The topic was brought to the table once again in October of this past year, when council directed staff to research a bailey bridge at the site, utilizing a modular bridge deck using shallow foundation in an effort to save costs, to which staff received a memo from DM Wills in February of this year, advising against that route.

"The recommendation from DM Wills remains to construct an 'arched' bridge on a helical pile foundation," reads the staff report. "The in-situ soils do not have enough bearing capacity for the proposed structure. Further, to maintain the existing clearance of 1.8 metres, the modular bridge needs to be elevated 1.0 to 1.2 metres higher at each abutment, leading to increased grading into the park."

There's a chance that the well-known bridge in Head Lake Park will be removed due to safety, with the future of a new bridge currently unknown. /FILE

Councillor Casey was quick to dispute the proposal. "Without piles, how many years has that one been there," he asked, to which Fearrey suggested at least since the 1970s. "If we extended the bridge length maybe 15 or 20 feet onto land on both sides, it should be more than adequate capacity to carry the load of that bridge ... just a different angle of looking at it," said Casey.

The headspace between water to bridge came to the surface of discussion, with Camelon noting that the bridge that leads across the water across from Emmerson Lumber does not have the same requirement, with the park bridge perhaps being built to accommodate paddlers or swimmers, whereas the street bridge came with the railway.

Camelon noted that if the shape were to change, they would run into issues with Transport Canada. "They want to see bridges go in, you know, as good or better, than what comes out," he said. "If you want to lower that headspace, we're going to have permitting issues with Transport Canada."

The report was received as information, with council deferring the decision around the next steps for the Head Lake Pedestrian Bridge.

A cup of kindness in Head Lake Park

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

While the summer may be hot, it's never too early to start planning for the warmth needed over the winter months. During last week's regular meeting of Dysart council, Drew Allen, the coordinator of the Highlands Shindig, and Sue Waite, the executive director for Fuel for Warmth, took to the stand to express their increased need across the community.

"We've used a lot of our reserves, and have had to limit how much help we're giving this year, so we are trying to expand our fundraising," said Waite, noting an all-time high of 132 calls this past season, using over $115,000 in fuel.

Fuel for Warmth is a registered charity, which provides financial support for heating homes across the County. For the past 15 years, the Highlands Shindig has been the primary fundraising initiative, with all proceeds going directly towards the cause. But with need spiking across the region, the organizers have tried to expand their offerings to be able to provide further service.

Recently, Michelle Anton, a volunteer with SIRCH and a member of the local Legion, approached Allen to discuss the Empty Bowls fundraiser. This initiative is a partnering between local potters and charities, with soups featured from restaurants around the County, and funds raised to give back wherever needed.

"It's been very successful," said Allen, "the first year there were over 200 guests … the second year they doubled the size of that event."

Hot on the heels of that success, Anton and Allen realized that perhaps there were some summer opportunities. "We've never done anything in the summer to reach the seasonal audience, the cottage audience," said Allen. "The people that we know flood our County in June, July, and August."

This was where the idea came from for Empty Mugs; mirroring the soup event, but held in Head Lake Park on July 18, 2026. "We'd like to do an event that attracts between two and three hundred people," said Allen, offering homemade mugs for all those attending.

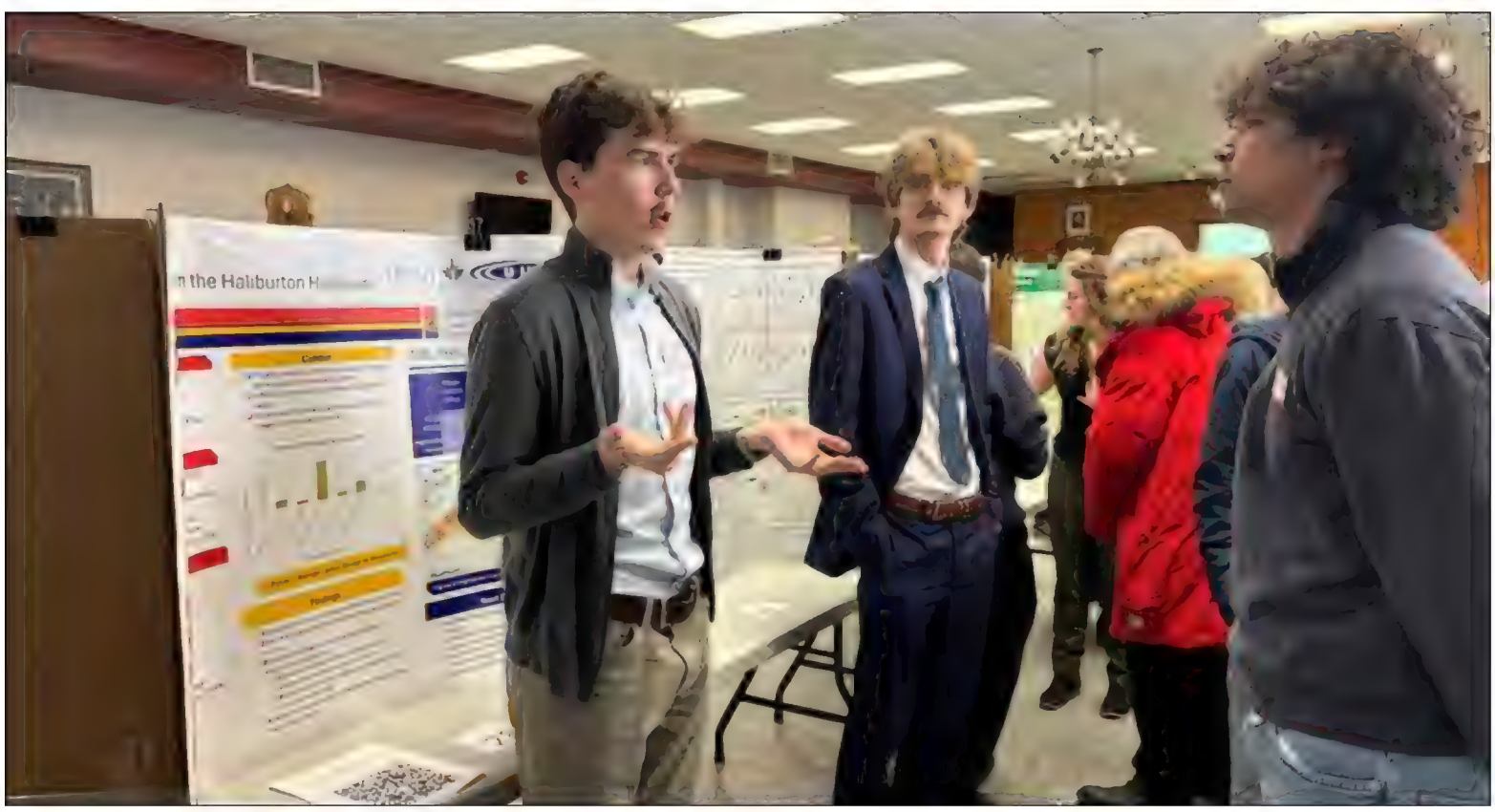
Allen sought a discount on the rental fees for using the band shell in Head Lake Park. He noted that he would pay the regular damage deposits, but the total ask of fees waived adds up to $300, including $100 for the new park use application, $100 for park use fee, and $100 for after hours washroom fee.

"Well surely we can do that," said Dysart Mayor Murray Fearrey, "What you're doing is wonderful, but it's going to be growing every year with inflation."

The request was approved by council to waive all fees with the exception of the damage deposit. Allen is hopeful that the summer event will raise between $10,000 to $15,000 for Fuel for Warmth.

Lots to learn

Students Ellise Morgan and Cate Crawford-Thompson shared their findings around artificial loon nests in local lakes as a part of the annual U-Links Celebration of Research this past weekend. /EMILY STONEHOUSE staff



The annual U-links Celebration of Research drew a very full house to the Haliburton Legion this past Saturday. With over 40 poster presentations on a variety of topics, students from Trent University shared their findings with the community.

Comedic gold

The Highlands Little Theatre production of Calendar Girls wrapped up this past weekend, with full-houses attending every performance. The play brought comedy, theatrics, and heartwarming moments, shared by all who participated. With a local cast and production team, the show was deemed a success online, and by all those who attended. /TIM YANO staff photographer

All–Canadian lineup promises hope for the future

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

When the world feels dark, it's important to look to the light.

And in this case, the light just happens to be a movie projector.

On Saturday, April 11, Those Other Movies will be presenting Doc(k) Days at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion in Haliburton. For over 15 years, this one-day documentary screening has brought dozens of educational and inspirational films in front of local audiences.

And this year will be no different.

But, while the world seems dark, the organizers had one goal in mind when selecting the lineup for this year. "We're celebrating our community," said Tammy Rea, an organizer for the event. "It's what we need right now. We need something positive. We need something happy."

While past years the organizers have tried to jam longer movies into the day, this year, with a specific focus on community, they have prioritized time and space to mingle, to chat, and to share the experience of movie-viewing with fellow audience members. "We're featuring art, food, music, and adventure," said Rea. "Those are all the facets of Haliburton County. It's who we are."

The first film for the day is *I am the Art: Nobuo Kubota*, exploring the life and artistic journey of 92-year-old Nobuo Kubota, a Japanese-Canadian artist whose work spans painting, sculpture, sound, music, installation, and film. "The film highlights Kubota's childhood in a Japanese internment camp, the influence of his Samurai father and caring for his wife, Lee, who had Alzheimer's while continuing his creative practice," reads the Doc(k) Days description. "It reflects on the lessons learned from Kubota's unwavering dedication to art and life, offering an inspiring story of creativity, wisdom, and the human spirit's enduring strength."

The second film, *Clairtone*, sheds light on what Rea referred to as "The Blackberry story of stereos." Many would remember Clairtone, a homegrown electronics company founded by Peter-Munk and David Gilmour in the 1960s. Renowned for their high-end stereos and colour televisions that epitomized iconic mid-century design, Clairtone soared to international acclaim, becoming a symbol of Canadian ingenuity and modernity. After six years of spectacular growth, Clairtone's failure to navigate economic challenges led to a dramatic decline. "It takes us back to a time when Canada believed in itself," said Rea.

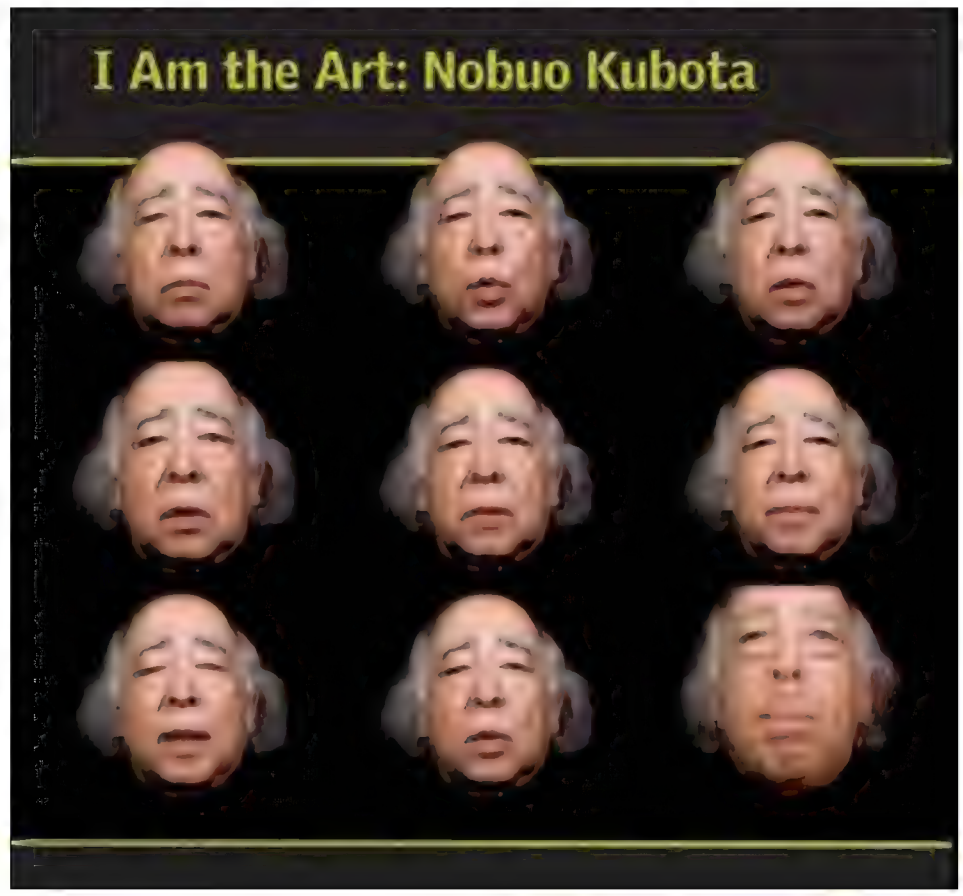
The next film, *We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of the Ontario Farmerettes* is the shortest film of the set, clocking at 49 minutes. The film "reveals the true story of the Ontario Farm Service Force" reads the Doc(k) Days release. "It put 40,000 volunteer teenage girls to work between 1941 and 1952, arriving from different parts of Ontario and Quebec to many locations in Southwestern Ontario." These girls were called "the Farmerettes", and their primary job: to ensure critical food production during a perilous period of modern history. Most had no prior farming experience. Working under relentless weather conditions and tightened schedules, the Farmerettes produced hundreds of thousands of tons of food that were shipped off to the frontlines to feed starving European populations and even prisoners of war. "Through reenactments and unique archival images, *We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of Ontario Farmerettes* recounts the story of these magnificent young women, now in their late 90s, reminding us that service comes in many forms," says the press release.

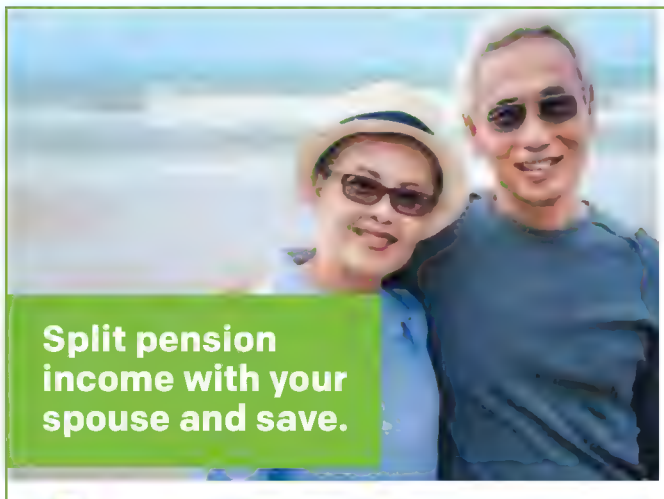
The final film of the day is *The Art of Adventure*. As young men in their twenties, renowned wildlife artist Robert Bateman and spirited biologist Bristol Foster embark on a globe-trotting adventure in the 1950s in a Land Rover they named the Grizzly Torque. It is a powerful story of environmental activism, youthful naivety, human connections and respect for all living things. "The more we know, the more we care." Rea noted that director Alison Reid - who was a guest the Doc(k) Day in 2019 with her film *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* - has created another incredible work, using footage taken by Bristol Foster and artwork by Robert Bateman.

Art, food, music, and adventure. And all films will be featured on the newly acquired screen in the theatre. While the experience of movie going in the Pavilion hasn't necessarily taken away from the lineups in the past, Rea is thrilled to be elevating the experience to a whole new level.

Using funds raised from ticket sales, the new 22-foot wide screen will mirror a real movie theatre screen, including the option to reflect light. While the projector screen in the past presented as dull or dark, this new screen will transport viewers to the inside of the film. And it will be making its community appearance for Doc(k) Day, 2026. "The community bought this screen," said Rea, "and we're just giving it right back to the community. It's so great. It's truly just a day of community."

Doc(k) Day is set for April 11, 2026. Tickets for the all-Canadian lineup can be purchased online at www.thoseothermovies.com under the "online store" tab. Tickets are $35 for all four films or $30 for season pass holders. Tickets for individual movies will be available for $10 with sales for all movies beginning when doors open on Saturday, April 11.





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Boshkung Brewing held their highly anticipated Keg Curling last week at the Minden Curling Club, with teams hitting the ice, throwing beer kegs instead of traditional curling rocks. The sought-after event attracted both beer lovers and curling fans, making for a fun evening on the ice. /THOMAS SMITH staff

Nikki Hutchison pushes a keg down the ice. /Thomas Smith staff

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Scott Russell comes to Haliburton

Scott Russell, Canadian Screen Award and Gemini Award-winning sports broadcaster has a few stories to tell about the Olympic games, past, present and future. He will be sharing his experiences and insights on April 8 as part of the Telling Our Stories speaker series.

He recently appeared before the Future of Sport in Canada Commission and the National Summit in Ottawa. Sport is under the microscope right now because of various transgressions, but also because of the spectre of sports gambling and an increasingly sedentary youth. The Canadian sports system needs a way forward. Scott has some opinions about that.

Scott Russell brought nearly 40 years of experience, passion and knowledge to his role as co-host of *CBC Sports Presents*. Russell's unparalleled enthusiasm for amateur sport shines through in every aspect of his work.

After joining CBC Charlottetown in 1985 as a news reporter, Russell turned to sports in 1986 and quickly established himself as a talent. From 1988 to 1992, he was a sports reporter and anchor for CBC in Montreal until he moved to Toronto as a network sports commentator. The longtime host of the weekly show *CBC Sports Presents*, Russell has covered 17 Olympic Games for CBC, including seven as host, and also led the network's coverage of six Pan Am Games, six Commonwealth Games, two FIFA World Cups and two FIFA Women's World Cups. In addition, Russell was a host and rink-side reporter for CBC's Hockey Night in Canada for 14 years.

Scott Russell will be coming to the next Speakers Series in April, to share his story in Canadian sports. /submitted

Also an acclaimed author of three books, Russell has earned numerous accolades throughout his broadcast career, including a Canadian Screen Award and Gemini Award with 15 nominations, a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his contributions to sports in Canada, the George Gross Award for Outstanding Broadcasting from Sports Media Canada, a Medal of Distinction from Toronto Sports Hall of Honour and a CBC President's Award in the Brand Champion category in recognition of his dedication and enthusiasm for his work covering amateur athletics for the network. He is an honorary board member of the Paralympic Foundation of Canada, an advisory board member for the International Centre for Olympic Studies at Western University, and is the fifth Chancellor of Nipissing University, North Bay, Ontario, from where he holds an honorary doctorate (D.Lit.).

An active runner, Russell completed the Boston Marathon in 2005 and in 2012, was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his contributions to sports in Canada. He currently lives in Toronto with his wife, Catherine.

The presentation takes place on Wednesday, April 8 at 7 to 9 p.m. at the HHOA Fish Hatchery. It may be necessary to change venues if tickets sales warrant. Admission is $15/person. If you would like to book a seat you can do so on line at www.tellingourstories.company.site or by email barrieinthehighlands@gmail.com, or phone 705-457-7557.

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Making a splash

The annual Spring Splash at Sir Sam's Ski and Ride saw lots of eager skiers and snowboarders hitting the slopes to make a splash. With costumes encouraged on the festive day, the event was entertaining for everyone, and concludes a very successful, snowy season at the Eagle Lake community hub. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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We thank all who apply for this position; however only those selected for an interview will be contacted.
The County of Haliburton is an equal employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.
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OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Leonard Henry Moss

Passed away peacefully with his children by his side on Friday, March 20, 2026, in his 89th year.

Deeply loved by his family and friends, Leonard leaves behind his three children and their spouses: Cinde Kellett (Mark Kellett), Cheryl Ahmed (Ansar Ahmed), and Allen Moss (Lisa Moss). He will be dearly missed by his grandchildren Eric, Carrie, Anisa, Dalton (Nicole), Curtis (Melissa), and Zachary, as well as his great-grandchildren, Sylvie and Archer. He is also survived by his siblings, Marlene and Sandra, and his spouse Barbara, along with her children Scott, Laura, and Leslie.

Leonard was loved by all who knew him. He had a gentle, caring soul and will be remembered for his fun-loving and easygoing nature. He found great joy in the outdoors and had a passion for cars, boats, fishing, and snowmobiling.

The family would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to the palliative care unit at Mackenzie Health Hospital for their compassionate care. In lieu of flowers, donations in Leonard's memory may be made to the palliative care unit at Mackenzie Health Hospital or to Haliburton Health Care Centre.

In Loving Memory of

Paul Michael Cummings Tribute

Paul started school at St Francis de Sales in Pickering, Ontario. He continued at the elementary schools in Haliburton, Ontario when his parents moved there in 1968. Paul attended Haliburton High School before attending Laurentian University on Sudbury, Ontario.
Paul is survived by his siblings: Carole, Elizabeth, Brenda, Patricia and Michael and pre deceased by siblings: Lorne, Kevin, Michelle and Donald and mother Mary Alice and father Michael Joseph.
Paul travelled to Victoria in the mid 1990's. He lived in Victoria, Sooke and Duncan area. Paul participated in various community groups and activities such as the Green Barter System, Near Death Experience (NDE) Society of Vancouver Island, Sooke Lions, peer helper at Sooke Family Resource Society, Brain Injury Society, artistic gyroscope dance, Every Step Counts, coached with Special Olympics ski team, Spirit Bears, electronic publishing, photography, men's groups, personal growth, Reiki, wholistic health, Huntingtons Disease (HD) Society and UBC HD research study.
Some of the sports Paul participated in are hockey, skating, golf, baseball, basketball, lacroose, pool, sailing, badminton and tennis. Paul did trades contract and driving instructor work.
Paul enjoyed going to music coffee houses, concerts, jazz festivals, plays, IMAX theatre, Victoria boat festival, Victoria inner harbor music and events or just enjoying an ice cream cone on the Beacon Hill Park lookout.
Travelling around Vancouver Island (Duncan , Sooke and Victoria areas) on his motor cycle or in his car was a pleasure Paul enjoyed while taking in the area and having a Timmy's coffee. Also, he enjoyed going for walks and always had to pet and engage with dogs/owners along the way.
Paul loved reading. He had over 600 books. In particular he enjoyed mystery, sci-fi and wholistic books.
Paul had a gift when he dialogued with people, he could succinctly summarize things in a one sentence response for others.. Paul's had a spiritual nature and had the intention to be guided by quality harmonious choices. Paul had an inner drive for fairness and justice.
Paul enjoyed going out to different restaurants and going to the Oak Bay pool. He made many friends on these outings. In his later years, Paul woke up every day glad to be alive and live in the moment. Paul regularly answered the phone 'Paul here'. Maybe, now when you think of Paul you will hear 'Paul here'.
Paul will be greatly missed by many people.
Cummings family and Chris Kunz
Condolences may be offered to the family at www.pacificcoastcremation.com

Nicholas Overton

It is with deep love and fond remembrance that the family of Nicholas Charles Overton announces his passing on March 16th, at the age of 73.

Nick was born in Chertsey, Surrey, UK, on December 20th, 1952. Nick was a true English gentleman who worked with the "Ministry of Ag" from an early age. His calling was with the police force in Surrey, and he retired as a Police Sargent.

Predeceased by his parents, Bertie and Gwen, as well as his siblings, Derek & Marie.

Nick is survived by his very loving wife, Leslie; stepson, Will (Steph); stepdaughter, Lisa (Dan); and his grandchildren, Aidan, Logan, and Charlie. Nick is also survived by his sister Carol, along with his many nieces and nephews from across the UK, Texas, and New Mexico.

The family wishes to extend a special thanks to NP Kathy McLaughlin and dear friends Guy and Colleen Pate. Nick will be fondly remembered by all who had the chance to know him.

Love you always and forever, Sargey - Leslie

Private Funeral Arrangements

Community FUNERAL HOME
www.communityfuneralhomes.com

As per the family's wishes, funeral arrangements are private. As an expression of sympathy, donations in Nick's memory can be made to a charity of your choice. Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the **HALIBURTON COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME**, 13523 Hwy #118, Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0 (705) 457-9209.

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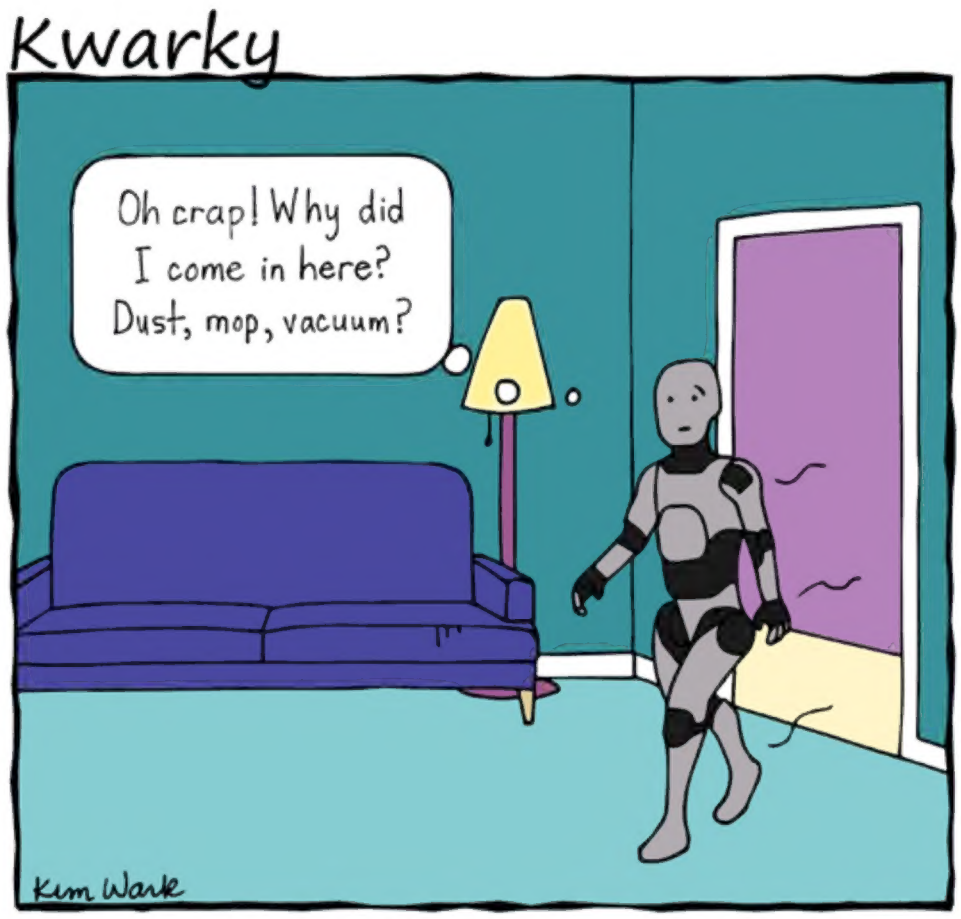

Old A.I. Robot

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	7	1		2		9		
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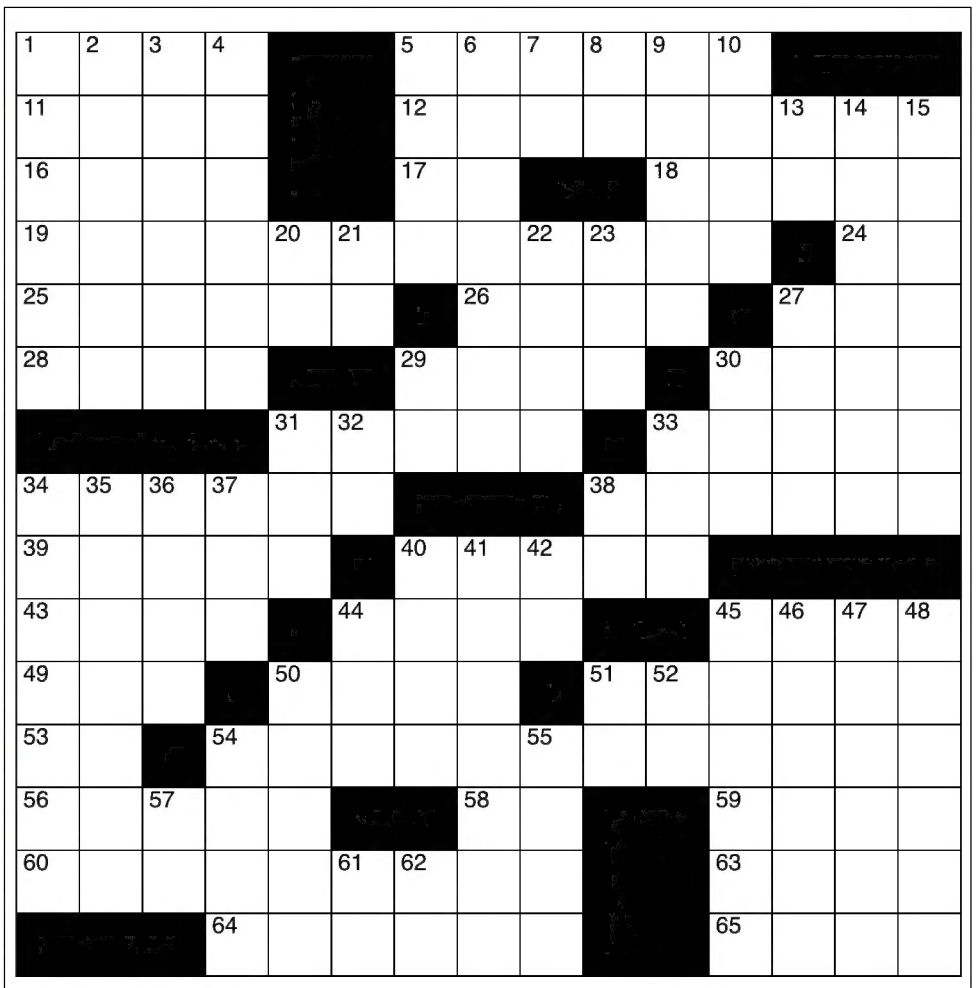
Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 20



CLUES ACROSS
1. 'Bird of Paradise' constellation
5. Red Sox WS winner Bronson
11. Whirl
12. The State Dept. has a notable one
16. Energy, style and enthusiasm
17. Part of the mind
18. Mountainous country
19. Type of beverage
24. Atomic #109
25. Opposite of falsities
26. Female sheep
27. Rocky peak
28. Sensitive information sharing environment
29. Ethnic group of Thailand
30. Patron saint of Rome Philip
31. Psychedelics
33. Japanese pine
34. Have an impact on
38. Violent disorder
39. A French river
40. Early Mesoamerican civilization
43. Messenger ribonucleic acid
44. Musician Clapton
45. Ancient Greek sophist
49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
50. Valley
51. A way to unwind
53. Atomic #93
54. Recommending
56. Indigo bush
58. Larry and Curly's pal
59. Off-Broadway theater award
60. Fencers
63. Small Eurasian deer (pl.)
64. Relating to songbirds
65. A way to assign

CLUES DOWN
1. Some are 'secret'
2. Intestinal openings
3. Distant planet
4. Assembly possessing high legislative powers
5. Genus of typical owls
6. One with distinctively colored hair
7. Red cross
8. An alternative
9. Abominable snowmen
10. About ear
13. The opening letters
14. Feeling of regret
15. Atomic #39
20. Luteinizing hormone
21. Atomic #55
22. Carries a debt
23. Albanian monetary unit
27. Semitic abjad letter
29. Yes
30. Negative
31. Earn a perfect score
32. Connecticut
33. Partner to cheese
34. Snack nuts
35. Quadruped's body part
36. Locate
37. Pitching statistic
38. '__, myself and I'
40. Utah city northwest of Provo
41. Football players in the trenches
42. One who runs the show
44. Wood
45. Performing artists
46. Slang for a cut
47. More breathable
48. Most crafty
50. Provokes into action
51. University of Dayton
52. Sodium
54. Large fish of the mackerel family
55. Not one
57. __ and behold
61. Sports highlight show
62. 'The Great Lakes State'

Answers on page 20

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Board of education cut is $272,000

Local boards facing more cuts

by Andrew Milne

No new cuts.

Well, maybe some.

The education minister's announcement a few months ago that there would be no further cuts to the education budget doesn't seem to have meant much when it came down to cuts locally.

All three boards in the planned amalgamated unit for this area — Muskoka, Victoria, and Haliburton — are facing additional cuts to their provincial transfer grants.

Muskoka and Haliburton — both boards which, due to the peculiarities of the current tax system have relatively low grant rates as compared with local levies — were capped at their respective 15 per cent maxima. Haliburton's grants dropped $272,000, while Muskoka's fell $728,000.

Victoria's drop is smaller in terms of percentage of grant, at around 9.5 per cent — but far larger in total dollars — at $2.6 million.

Victoria, Muskoka, and Haliburton vary widely in size and financial position (see sidebar on page 2 for summary). Due to the varying financial positions, the cuts seem to mean very different things to different boards. The Muskoka board already passed its budget, shortly after receiving the official word on the grant numbers, and was actually able to deliver a 3.3 per cent local mill rate reduction, without, says chair Karen Ellis, significantly affecting services. Ellis credited the fact that the board had made quite substantial cuts to transportation and staffing last year, as a significant factor in the relative calm that prevails around this year's board table.

In Victoria and in Haliburton, however, the cuts may mean very different things.

Haliburton trustees and administration haven't discussed it in detail yet, but seem to feel they're between a rock and a hard place as far as satisfying the province's requirements is concerned. The province has instructed the board not to raise taxes, and has stated the cuts should not affect the classroom, but, Haliburton's chair and director told *The Times* last week, it looks extremely unlikely to them that this is going to be possible.

Victoria's chair and director seemed that much more sure that in their board, the province's demands simply no longer answer to reality. Following last year's smaller cut, the Victoria board cut 100 staff from the payroll, and made program and transportation cuts. This year, they say, they're running out of places to turn.

They may well wind up increasing the local rates, say both chair Sharon Summers and director Dianne Dalton. But Summers very much wants to make one thing clear about her opinion about that decision.

Said Summers, "The part that needs to be understood is that it is not the Victoria County Board of Education that is raising the property tax. It's the province of Ontario that's raising the property tax. Because when they gave us this grant cut, they knew darned well this would mean a difference in property taxes — 3.3 per cent approximately. We're doing their dirty work, and we've been doing it a long time too."

Haliburton chair Cheryl Murdoch seemed to echo Summers' comments — and the general feeling around board tables that trustees are being made the scapegoats for the pain inflicted by provincial cuts.

Says Murdoch, "Somehow no matter how much is in the paper, on the radio or TV or anything, we're the middle group, and we always get caught and blamed. The public has to realize that we didn't do this. The public has to understand that we're being put in this position, and we're going to have to creatively come up with $270,000. And that's not an easy task."

Hurting the classroom

That the province can say there would be no reduction in funding, and then come in with cuts to the three local boards, say board sources, doesn't entirely surprise them.

Says Victoria's Dalton, "We said almost immediately when the minister stood up and made those comments, how can you? First of all we know that they guaranteed that they were going to give a subsidy to those boards that were hit by fifteen per cent or more. That subsidy last year came from outside the education pot. This year it was extracted from the education pot before the grants came out. We know that they also expanded the group of boards that were eligible, and that therefore took more money off. We knew there'd be growth in the province. We knew transportation grants would be down. So we

(more on page 2)

The Guild of Fine Arts' 1997 members show awarded its prizes this weekend to: Walter Verhoeven (knitting and crochet award of merit for his crochet cotton sweater), Shelley Beach (watercolour award of merit for "Red Sky in the Morning"), Grahame Wales (pottery award of merit for his birdfeeder), Wendy Bateman (textile award of merit for "Overshot Summer Jacket"), Kai-Liis McInnes (painting award of merit for "Monday, Monday, Monday"), Chris Stender (excellence in textiles guild scholarship for "Shades of a Desert"), Bob Robbins (excellence in three dimensional work guild scholarship for "Nesting Shaker Boxes"), Ruth Orr (excellence in framed work guild scholarship for "Reflections in Green"), Barbara Joy Peel (award of overall excellence scholarship and Pat Irwin memorial award of excellence in pottery for "Smoked Fired Vase"), Lynn Roberge Brohm (Ethel Curry Award in memory of Pat Irwin for "La Loba (Wolf Woman)"), and Jean Bolt (best new artist for her beaded scarf). Pictured are Verhoeven, Stender, Wales, John Peel accepting for Barbara Joy, Roberge Brohm, Bolt, and Jeanne Anthon, who presented the awards on behalf of the guild.

Another doctor signs for the summer

Minden has another new doctor, at least for the summer.

The Lions' medical clinic signed on Doctor James Orbinski as a locum to work starting this week. Orbinski will continue until the end of August.

Orbinski is a widely travelled physician with extensive experience in war zones, including Zaire, Rwanda, Afghanistan, and Somalia — all in the last four years — and helped deal with a cholera outbreak in Peru in 1992. He was chief of mission during his last three stints overseas, and is a founding member of Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) Canada. He has also run a private practice in Orangeville.

Orbinski will be taking patients at the Lions' clinic starting this Wednesday, and is seeking hospital privileges towards assisting in Minden's emergency ward.

Lions president Daryl Moore said the service club is very happy to have Orbinski's assistance for the summer, and expects he will be an ideal complement to the clinic's other full-time physician, Dr. Judith Smith. Summer is generally a busy time for the area's clinics and hospitals, due to the influx of tourists and seasonal residents.

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2026 MARKET OUTLOOK

As we settle into the start of 2026, I've been doing a lot of reflecting on the year behind us. The Haliburton market has officially transitioned into a buyer's market, moving away from the frantic pace of previous years toward a more cautious and strategic environment.

2025 Retrospective: A Shifting Landscape

- **Inventory Surge:** Listings spiked as COVID-era owners sold due to rising carrying costs and stricter short-term rental (STR) regulations.
- **Pricing Softening:** While waterfront remains the premier asset, average sale prices have begun to ease.
- **A Slower Pace:** Buyers are taking more time to decide, forcing sellers to recalibrate their price expectations.

2026 Outlook: Trends to Watch

- **Record-High Inventory:** A "double wave" of new 2026 listings and unsold 2025 carryover is expected to create the highest inventory levels in over a decade.
- **Sideline Buyers Return:** Stabilizing Bank of Canada rates are expected to bring cautious buyers back into the market.
- **Strategic Pricing is Vital:** In a high-volume market, accurate pricing is the most critical factor for a successful sale.
- **The Spring Advantage:** Baumgartner Realty Group anticipates a seasonal uptick in demand, advising sellers to list early to capture motivated "first-wave" buyers.

HALIBURTON COUNTY

RESIDENTIAL SALES

2024 **544 SALES** → 2025 **470 SALES**

14%

NEW LISTINGS

2024 **1419 LISTINGS** → 2025 **1516 LISTINGS**

6.8%

AVERAGE SALE PRICE

NON-WATERFRONT

2024 **$426,911** → 2025 **$397,497**

7.4%

WATERFRONT

2024 **$878,633** → 2025 **$811,671**

8.25%

**Data researched from the OnePoint Association of Realtors as of February 9, 2026*

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